

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

MAMIE TILL-MOBLEY

public speaker, activist

Page | 1

“With each day, I give thanks for the blessings of life—the blessings of another day and the chance to do something with it. Something good. Something significant. Something helpful. No matter how small it might seem. I want to keep making a difference.”



COURTESY OF LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Background Information

Born: November 23, 1921; Died: January 6, 2003

Till-Mobley was born in Mississippi and her family moved North during the Great Migration. This was a period when millions of Black people were moving away from the South to escape racial violence and Jim Crow Laws.

Few of Till-Mobley’s friends finished high school. She was the first Black student to make the honor roll and was only the fourth Black student to graduate from the mostly White Argo Community High School. She went on to graduate from Chicago Teachers College and earned a master’s degree from Loyola University Chicago.¹

Till-Mobley’s Resistance

Till’s son, Emmett, was murdered when he was 14 years old. He was accused of flirting with a White woman at a grocery store in Mississippi. That night, a lynch mob of White men kidnapped Emmett from his home and murdered him. The jury of all-White people decided not to send the murderer to jail, even though he later admitted his guilt. This court case became a symbol of the unfair treatment that Black people faced.

Mamie Till-Mobley toured the country with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to tell people about her son’s life and death. Although it was painful for her to relive the memory, she knew that it was important. She kept her son’s story alive in hopes that it would never happen to anyone again.²

Achievements

Till-Mobley’s tour with the NAACP sharing her son’s story was one of the most successful fundraising campaigns the NAACP ever had. Her autobiography was published a year after her death, called, *“Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime that Changed America.”* The monument at her grave reads, “Her pain united a nation.”

¹ Whitfield, S. (n.d.). Mamie Till (23 November 1921–07 January 2003) | American National Biography. Retrieved November 10, 2019, from <https://www.anb.org/view/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.001.0001/anb-9780198606697-e-1501388;jsessionid=38FA1CE58325C69D94A77B01F07FC3EA>

² Houck & Dixon, Davis & David (2009). Women and the Civil Rights. University Press of Mississippi. p. 17.

Essential Questions

1. Why did Till-Mobley think that it was important to share her son's story?
2. What story about social injustice have you been told that deeply affected you? How did you change after you heard the story?
3. **"With each day, I give thanks for the blessings of life—the blessings of another day and the chance to do something with it. Something good. Something significant. Something helpful. No matter how small it might seem. I want to keep making a difference."**
 - a. What small way(s) can you do something good or significant to make a difference?